

OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE May 2, 2018

DANIEL

Answers to the Questions (Lesson 20)
Found on Page 103-107

Ezekiel: In 1:1 Ezekiel writes *in the thirtieth year*. Some believe that to be a reference to his age. In Numbers 4:3 it states that a man could enter the priesthood starting at that same age. So this would have been the time period when he would have become a priest and would have entered into service at the temple. But to finally become eligible for the priesthood (while in exile and in a foreign land) must have been a bitter and disillusioning experience for Ezekiel.

Visions: In Chapter 1 the vision reveals the transcendence of God and his indescribable glory. In it there are four living creatures. The number *four* often stands for completeness (and this number is used over forty times in Ezekiel). These four living creatures are attendants to his throne and represent the completion of God's creation.

Symbols: Ezekiel uses symbols to prophesy the coming siege of Jerusalem. In one instance, he lies on his left side for 390 days and then on his right side for 40 days. At another time he is commanded to shave his head and beard, casting one-third in the fire, cutting one-third with the sword, and scattering one-third to the wind. With each prophecy we see the purpose of God enacted as it reveals all that is about to unfold in Israel.

Sinfulness: An image of the Canaanite goddess Asherah is set up in the Temple (as in the days of Manasseh). The leaders secretly practice animal worship. Women mourn Tammuz, the Babylonian fertility god who supposedly died *with the old year* in order to rise again in the spring. Men turned their backs on God in order to worship the sun.

In Chapters 9 through 11 the glory of God departs the Temple.

In 9:3 the glory of God moves to the threshold of the Temple.

In 10:8 the glory of God also stops above the cherubim.

In 11:23 the glory of the Lord goes up from the city and stops above the mountain east of it.

Restoration: In the New Testament, Jesus is considered the Good Shepherd and the One who judges between the sheep and the goats. The covenant of peace mirrors the new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah. It looks forward to the final peace initiated through Christ. The term *peace* is the fullness of life enjoyed in complete security (back to the Good Shepherd metaphor).

Restoration from exile is prophesied in Chapter 36. God reveals that he plans a total transformation of the heart and mind and spirit that enables Israel to serve God. Chapter 37 describes the valley of the dry bones and shows that Israel will live again. God will put his Spirit into them so that they will live (much like the new life we receive through Christ Jesus).

Redemption: Some see in his vision a hope for the renewed worship of God and the promise of worship in a restored temple. The old temple was defiled (as was the old covenant) and it was necessary to form a new one. The New Testament church is the temple of the Holy Spirit. It is where the people of God worship him in spirit and in truth. In the New Jerusalem there will be no temple because the Lord God and the Lamb will be the temple. It is a description of the Christ to come.

Application: The presence of God fills a purified church and God will dwell there forever. God moves forward toward the fulfillment of his purpose to give us new life, a new heart, a new covenant, and the Good Shepherd.



Samaria

The central hill country of Ephraim is Samaria.
The Northern Kingdom is also referred to as Ephraim.

The Assyrians conquered Samaria in 722 BCE.
Many of the people were deported.
Foreigners came and resettled in the territory.

The Judeans said Samaritans were ethnically impure.
They had their own worship center at Mount Gerizim.

Jesus encountered hostility among the Samaritans.

Mission to Samaria began after the death of Stephen.

AND NOW TO DANIEL . . .

There are two books of the Bible that are classified as Apocalyptic – Daniel and Revelation. Portions of other books of the Bible also contain apocalyptic literature.

The term comes from the Greek word *apokalypsis* which means *a revelation or disclosure*.

It is a vision from God concerning the imminent coming to the end of the present evil age. It describes the final advent of the kingdom of God.

Certain passages in Joel, Amos, and Zechariah are apocalyptic in nature.

Portions of the Olivet discourse and 1 Thessalonians 4:13ff are also part of this genre.

It is more accurately attributed to the inter-testamental period (books outside of the canon).

All scholars agree that the book of Daniel provides the prototype for this literary form.

Its writings arise out of a context of renewed Jewish nationalism (Maccabean revolt).

Scholars agree that it was written during times of intense persecution and crisis.

It is a literature of the oppressed who saw no hope for the nation based on human history.

The setting is the transition from the Babylonian empire to that of the Medes and Persians. The historical information given about this period is partially inaccurate and unreliable. The information becomes more exact when the book looks forward ...
after the expedition of Alexander the Great (334 BCE)
the visionary repeatedly has in mind Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the 2nd Century BCE
he tried to hellenize Judaism by force (to make them into Greeks in character and language)

The author wrote the book when the very survival of the Jewish faith was at stake. He saw the Maccabean uprising (166 BCE) and looked to God for any decisive deliverance. He belonged to the Hasidim whose religious faith demanded loyalty to the Torah at any cost. God is able to deliver the faithful.
The kingdom of God is an everlasting kingdom.
Even though tyrants parade and boast ... their days are numbered.

He makes use of a figure who was regarded as righteous and wise (Ezekiel 14:14 and 20). In the 1st part of the book, we are told of Daniel in the third person. In the visions of the 2nd part, Daniel *becomes* the author (also a characteristic of the literature).

The real theme of the book of Daniel is the relation between worldly rule and the reign of God. In the 1st part the stories acknowledge the rule of God in the present. In the 2nd part the announcements are centered on the coming of the reign of God. It will put an end to earthly political power. The main focus is the *end of the days* for the duration of the world is limited. This will radically transform present conditions. The author seeks to comfort the people and to urge them to remain faithful. They are to have hope and persevere while they wait.

The late date of its composition explains why it is listed among the *Writings* (Hebrew Bible). The Greek Bible put the book of Daniel among the prophetic books.



The Israelites were to rekindle their faith.
They were in danger of being extinguished by the severe policies of the rulers.
It was a summons for them to have unyielding loyalty even in the face of persecution.
The time was near when God would win the decisive victory and end years of desolation.
It also introduced the messianic age.

In each case a revelation is granted to a human seer who has visions of the supernatural world.
The visions are explained at least partially by an angelic interpreter.
The visions reveal that the supernatural world determines human history.
The earthly adversary will be defeated through divine intervention.
The righteous will live in union with God forever and it anticipates resurrection.

It bridges the gap between Israel's historical books and the New Testament.
It uncovers a great spiritual warfare among the angelic and demonic forces.
It provides a solid basis for comfort in the midst of adversity.
It challenges the people of God to faithfulness.

The Book of Daniel

It is written in two different Semitic languages.
Chapters 1:1-2:4a and 8-12 are written in Hebrew.
Chapters 2:4b-7 are written in Aramaic (the official language of the ancient Near East).

Chapters 1-6

The first half of the book consists of six stories that are referred to as *court stories*.
Within the court stories there are contest stories found in Chapters 2 and 4-5.
Within the court stories there are also conflict stories found in Chapters 3 and 6.
Derived from the life of the Jewish eastern Diaspora after the exile in 587/586 BCE.
More likely around the Persian (539-333 BCE) or Hellenistic (333-63 BCE) periods
They are considered fictional accounts that represent the folklore of the Diaspora community.

These chapters are set in the royal courts of the Babylonia, Median, and Persian empires.
Daniel distinguishes himself as a champion of Jewish piety.
He is also a divinely inspired interpreter of dreams and signs.
Daniel credits God with his dream interpretations and does not attribute them to his own talents.

Reflection on Chapter 6 (the meaning of nonviolent resistance):

Gandhi made comments on the book of Daniel in his work in South Africa and India.
He declared Daniel to be *one of the greatest passive resisters that ever lived*.

Gandhi used Daniel when he told the Indian South Africans that they should *sit with their doors flung wide open and tell those gentlemen (South African authorities) that whatever laws they passed were not for them unless those laws were from God*.

Gandhi assumed that Daniel had actually flung open the windows in flagrant disregard of Darius' decree.

Chapters 7-12

The last six chapters are the most important examples of apocalyptic literature in the Bible. Daniel has his own visions in the night that are interpreted for him by an angel.

His vision in Chapter 7 contains the essential elements of other dreams.

The sea represents the powers of chaos (a cosmic force opposed to God).

Later in the vision Daniel learns that the beasts represent four kings.

After the vision of the four beasts, the focus shifts to God's heavenly court.

Abruptly, the focus leaves the heavenly court and is back on the fourth beast that is slain.

The scene jumps again to heaven.

One like a *son of man* comes on the clouds and is presented before God and becomes king.

The rest of the chapter indicates that Israel also receives sovereignty on earth.

The holy ones are angels and the one like a *son of man* is probably the angel Michael.

Michael is the heavenly patron of Israel.



Daniel 8-11 covers much the same material as Daniel 7 but with more details.

In Chapter 9 he reads that in the *books* the desolation of Jerusalem must last for 70 years.

It fulfills the prophecy of Jeremiah.

He prays for God to act on behalf of his people and city.

The angel Gabriel appears and tells Daniel that he has come to give wisdom and understanding.

He reveals his revelation in verses 20-27.

In Chapter 10 the mode of revelation shifts from vision to direct instruction.

The instruction given to Daniel is offered again by the angel Gabriel.

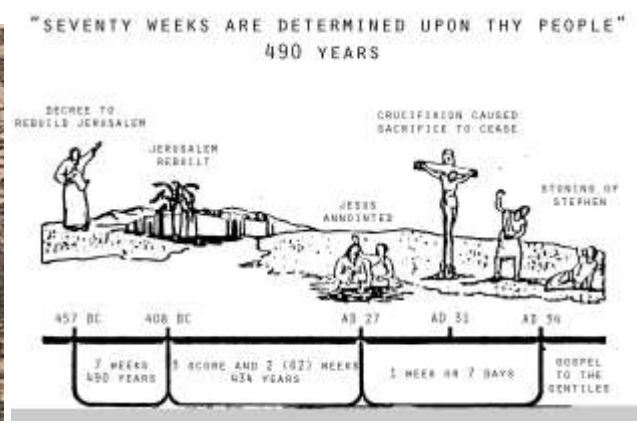
An angelic war is being waged in which he is fighting against a series of princes.

The princes represent the earthly empires.

Gabriel has only Michael as an ally.

He must soon return to combat.

But first he will tell Daniel what is written in the *book of truth*.



Chapter 11: The angel states that there will be four kings of Persia and the last one will make war on Greece. After him will come a great king and that king's empire will be broken up. There will be wars and marriages between the kings of the South and the North. The king of the North will desecrate the Temple and set up *the abomination that causes desolation*. At the end-time there will be a war between the king of the South and the king of the North and the king of the North will meet his end *between the sea and the Holy Mountain*.

This final vision is set in *the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia*.

It is 70 years since Daniel was taken captive in 606 BCE.

It fulfills the prophecy of Jeremiah that the exile would last 70 years.

Chapter 11 gives a broad sweep of history from the 6th Century BCE to the 2nd Century.

The time period covered is uneven.

In three verses ...

two centuries of Persian history plus the conquests of Alexander the Great
the break-up of his empire (over two and a half centuries of history)

In 16 verses ...

the century and a half of wars between the Ptolemies (Egypt) and the Seleucids (Syria)

In 25 verses ...

the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (which lasted less than 10 years)

Chapter 12: At that time (the end time) Michael will arise. There will be great distress but those Jews whose names are written will be saved and the dead will awaken to everlasting shame or life. Daniel asks how long it will be before these things are fulfilled and he is told – *From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.*

Lesson: History leads to the ultimate goal of the defeat of God's enemies.

It leads to the establishment of God's authority over a harmonious cosmos and a faithful people.

It shows a close connection between decisions made in heaven and in human history.

Chapter	Historical Empires			
	<u>Neo-Babylonian Empire</u>	<u>Medean Empire</u>	<u>Achaemenid Empire</u>	<u>Macedonian Empire</u>
Daniel 2	Head of gold	Chest and 2 arms of silver	Belly and thighs of bronze	2 Legs of Iron (Empire of Alexander) Feet of mixed iron and clay (division of the empire)
Daniel 7	Winged Lion	Lopsided Bear	4 Headed/4 Winged Leopard	Iron toothed beast w/Little Horn
Daniel 8			2-horned Ram	He Goat Great Horn (Alexander the Great) Four horns (Diadochi)
Daniel 11-12			Three Kings of Persia	Great Warrior King (Alexander) King of the South (Ptolemies) King of the North (Seleucids)

Beyond the Old Testament

With the book of Daniel the Old Testament period comes to a close (within the Hebrew Bible). The story of Israel ends on a note of intense expectation. Soon the time would come of which the prophet's had spoken – the dawning of God's kingdom. The Maccabean revolution was successful for a time. But the successors of the Maccabees lost their religious zeal. After about a century of independence, the Jews were subjected to a different empire – the empire of Rome.

External conflicts included the rivalry with the Samaritans that reached a peak in 128 BCE. Different groups arose over how the devout Jews should interpret their tenets of faith.

The Sadducees advocated a policy of tolerance and compromise. They claimed to be strict devotees of the Torah and did not accept the oral laws. They rejected the doctrine of the resurrection because the Torah did not speak of it. For the same reason they did not believe in angels or demons or predictions of end-times.

Zealots were more in line with the Maccabean revolutionaries. The Pharisees adapted the rules and teachings of the Torah to the changing life conditions. Most Pharisees opposed any zealous revolts against foreign rulers. They sought to maintain the strictest separation from the contaminations of the world.

Assignment for May 9

Complete the Exercises on Pages 109-113

Read all of the Minor Prophets listed on Page 113 (or the portions outlined)